

**ADJOURNED CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
February 7, 2012
7:00 P.M.**

Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding

Present: Council Member Roxanne M. Burns
Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso
Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith
Mayor Graham

Also Present: Robert J. Slye, City Attorney

City staff present: Elliott Nelson

DISCUSSIONS

Executive Session Topic from February 6, 2012 Meeting

Council Member Burns stated that during last night's executive session the issue of a RFP for a insurance carrier was discussed and she thought it should be reported in open session.

Council Member Smith stated he is concerned that this was discussed in executive session because it did not involve litigation or a city employee.

Bob Slye, City Attorney clarified that this falls under the provision of 105 of the Public Officers' Law which permits the discussion of the employment history of a particular corporation. He noted that no action was taken in executive session that requires to be reported.

City Manager Recruitment

Mayor Graham stated he wanted to seek professional advice that is respected and local in nature of the region.

John Krol, retired City Manager of Ogdensburg, stated that he has been retired for six years and does some consulting work for FEMA. He told Council that he is here as a resource and to answer questions about the process. He explained that he has not done executive recruiting in the past but has been on the receiving end of recruitment which gives him familiarity with different methods that other communities have used. He handed out to Council copies of the ICMA Recruitment Guidelines Handbook which gives detail of items that Council should consider for options in recruiting a manager.

Mayor Graham stated that according to the law there must be a City Manager in place at all times so Council needs to appoint an interim.

Mr. Krol mentioned that Council could find the most appropriate department head and make that individual the acting City Manager while the recruitment process takes place. He said that an external option is available as well and Council could bring an outside individual in for this time period. He suggested the outside candidate be from New York State but added that the pool of interim managers is not as big in New York compared to states that have more Council/Manager forms of government. In addition, he stated that Council needs to define if the position is full time or for a specified number of days because some retired City Managers are more inclined to do the job for three days a week and be available by phone on the remaining days of the week. He stated that in Upstate New York an interim City Manager is few and far between so he suggested looking internal to find a person that Council is confident in.

Mayor Graham asked with an internal candidate, how to handle the problem of asking the individual to go back to the position they were doing prior to the temporary appointment or does the candidate become a contender for the permanent position.

Mr. Krol advised that Council establish up front whether that person is also going to be a candidate for the full time position. He noted it is better if the candidate is not interested in the permanent position so there is no “psychological burn” in case he is not chosen.

Council Member Burns inquired about Mr. Krol’s educational background.

Mr. Krol responded that it is mostly social sciences but he has 15 years of planning experience. He stated that sometimes department heads are not seen as manager material and it is tough for a department head to make the leap to the broader general administration role.

Council Member Burns asked if it is important for someone to have a municipal background.

Mr. Krol indicated that historically most municipal managers were city engineers but now planning and development plays a role. He noted that a department head that has been with the City under all kinds of conditions could be elevated to manager level. However, he did mention it is now more in the field of public administration and that people start as Assistant to the City Manager, move to Assistant City Manager then City Manager.

Council Member Burns questioned whether someone from the private sector could be a good candidate.

Mr. Krol remarked that it could work with the right person but there is a learning curve and the private sector is very different than the public sector. He added that they would not have familiarity with the laws of New York State nor networking contacts.

Mayor Graham asked if someone with a school district background would make a good interim.

Mr. Krol said that it is an option because they have familiarity with some of the government processes.

In response to Mayor Graham's inquiry, Mr. Krol suggested recruitment could be done by posting ads in networking publications. Referring to the handout, he stated that smaller communities do the recruitment themselves by the mayor taking the lead or through a committee. He advised that the screening process is the most important part and suggested an in-depth background search be done on the final candidates.

Council Member Smith asked how to filter the candidates to get to the finalists.

Mr. Krol said Council should look at the number of years of experience and in what fields as well as their degrees. He reminded Council that the pool of potential City Managers is small.

Council Member Smith asked if there is a larger pool of younger professionals with the background of being second in charge.

Mr. Krol confirmed that there are a lot of Assistant Managers from large communities looking for their first City Manager assignment. He suggested advertising in publications such as ICMA, NYCOM, the local paper and the Association of County Newsletter.

Mayor Graham asked how appealing Watertown is based on the historic pay structure and the location within the state.

Mr. Krol agreed that the North Country is a tough sell and stated that the pay scale needs to be in the 6 digits.

Mayor Graham remarked that he is not interested in a nationwide search because they would not be familiar with the issues of New York State.

Mr. Krol suggested that the advertising should be done nationally and then the screening process should be thorough. He stated that an executive search firm should first talk to Council as a body and individually as well as department heads to determine expectations and issues. He said that a job ad would be formulated from those ideas and approved by Council before it is published.

Mayor Graham stated he feels the need for a facilitator to help Council draft the ad and get through the screening process to prevent rival agendas but he is weary of using a head hunter.

Council Member Butler stated that the recruitment is the Council's responsibility. He added that Council needs to look at a person's education, experience, accomplishments, talents, skills and then whether they are from New York State. He indicated that Council should do the work and write the job description and only use a facilitator if they have questions.

Council Member Smith agreed that Council needs a "go-to" person to review the ad and answer questions.

Council Member Butler stated a facilitator is someone that they can bounce ideas off and can alert Council if there is something that they should be doing better because no one on Council has a background in human resources.

Council Member Burns summarized her interpretation of the discussion as there is no need for a head hunter because the bulk of the responsibility lies with Council but there is a need for a professional to call upon for guidance.

Mayor Graham stated that to keep the process professional and agendas out of it then Council needs to use someone like Mr. Krol. He added that Council would review everything along the way.

Council Member Macaluso stated that none of Council is qualified to make up a job description because it is beyond their realm of expertise.

In response to Mayor Graham's inquiry, Mr. Krol stated a facilitator would probably charge a flat rate. He reminded Council that he is only available as a resource and is willing to answer phone calls with questions and give ideas on how to proceed. He referred to the handout and stated that the typical timeframe to fill the position is 3-4 months. He offered to provide a list of names that could assist Council with the process. He said that if Council wants to handle the process on its own then he suggests setting a point person within the committee to push the process along.

Council Member Smith stated he feels Council is very capable of handling this recruitment with the use of a resource person. He added that it would be better to have one person appointed to answer questions from the candidates about the community. He stated this person could be someone from the Council or someone inside the City.

Mayor Graham stated there is no shortage of things that can go wrong in this process, not the least of which are the rivalry and suspicions that naturally occur between people who have the good intentions of the community but honest differences of opinions. Therefore, he advised that someone is needed to help develop the job description, place an ad and help with the process.

Council Member Burns stated that speaking with Mr. Krol was a great starting place. She agreed with Council Member Smith and Council Member Butler in that Council is capable of driving this process but felt nobody has the free time available to be the point person.

Council Member Macaluso indicated that Council is going to be under a lot of scrutiny and this needs to be upfront without any backroom discussions. Therefore, she stated that Council needs someone from the outside that is more objective.

Council concurred that they would like to review a proposal from Mr. Krol to act as a facilitator.

Mr. Krol agreed to put a proposal together for Council to review. He referred to page 25 of the handout and suggested Council fill out the form and add any other thoughts to be incorporated.

He stated the ad could then be easily written from there. He stressed as a facilitator it is important to keep the process on track and filter through the candidates. He reminded Council that they need to determine what strengths and characteristics are most valued.

Mayor Graham stressed Council needs to work on appointing an interim City Manager first then there will be a natural transition in place while the recruiting process takes place.

Council Member Butler asked if anyone had any ideas on a local facilitator.

Mayor Graham stated that if anyone wants to suggest a local facilitator or submit a proposal, Council would be willing to review it.

Council concurred that they would discuss this further once the proposal was received.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:15 P.M. until Monday, February 13, 2012 by motion of Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith, and seconded by Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr. and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk